

TAH Instruction Plan Year One
Sharla Crawford

Slave Diaries

Essential Question: We have learned about the slave trade and the institution of slavery, but what do we know about the life, culture, or emotion of an individual slave or group? Were all slave experiences the same?

National Standards:

Time, Continuity, and Change: systematically employ processes of critical historical inquiry to reconstruct and reinterpret the past, such as using a variety of sources and checking their credibility, validating and weighing evidence for claims, and searching for causality.

Culture: apply an understanding of culture as an integrated whole that explains the functions and interactions of language, literature, the arts, traditions, beliefs and values, and behavior patterns.

Individual Development and Identity: articulate personal connections to time, place, and social/cultural systems.

Materials Needed:

- Large piece of butcher paper
- Post It notes
- Computers and Internet Access
- Scanned/overhead/computer images of
 - “The Old Plantation” unknown artist
 - “Peter” 1863

Lesson:

Anticipatory Set

Write “slavery” on the board and ask students to respond while you write their answers on the board. Now write the word “slave” on the board and record answers as students respond. Answers will of course vary, but there is a striking difference in the amount of responses you will get between “slavery” and “slave”. Students seem to have difficulty defining “slave” because they cannot identify with it.

At the beginning of class I placed a large piece butcher paper on the wall where students could access it and see it. Divide the paper in three parts labeling the first section “what I know”, the second “what I want to learn” and the third “what I know now”. (This can be done on a dry erase or chalkboard as long as you record the answers and rewrite them at the conclusion of the lesson)

Hand out Post It notes to students, 3 or more per student.

Ask the students to now think about what they know about the living conditions of a slave in the United States. Keeping in mind things such as food, shelter, traditions, culture, family, daily living conditions, etc... Students should fill out at least three Post It notes with separate thoughts on them and when they are finished place them in the first section of the butcher paper. Some students struggle coming up with three ideas and I allowed them to state that they didn't know about a particular item.

After all students have posted their ideas, ask them to write down at least another three questions that they have, or three things they would like to know about the life, traditions, culture of a slave/slavery. When finished they should put those questions in the second section of the butcher paper.

*Most questions that students have are ones that will be answered during their primary source document research. When I asked students what they wanted to know all subjects were going to be covered by either their research or my future instruction.

If time allows read aloud some of the "knows" asking questions about where they learned these things? How valid are those sources? (If you can, make time for this, I find it really drives the primary source documentation idea)

Read some of the "want to learn". Ask: What would be good sources to find the answers to these?

I found that students were able to come up with the answer, but if they don't, tell them. One of the best sources of information about the living conditions or culture of a group or a single person is that group or person themselves.

At this point in the year I have already discussed primary source documents, if you haven't done so, add some extra time into the lesson to address this.

Let your students know that over the next few days (I teach one hour and fifty minute classes and this lesson took roughly six hours to complete) they will be looking at photos and reading about the lives of former slaves in the United States. At the end of this they will be taking on the persona of a slave and writing several diary entries about their lives.

Primary Source Observation

Next I tell students that we will be looking at a series of art and photos and I want them to think about what they are seeing in each one. I start with the painting "The Old Plantation" and ask students what they see. Answers were: "They look happy, they are singing, they look like they are entertaining each other". Eventually one student said, "A white slave owner must have painted this to make it look like his slaves were happy to the outside world". This was the observation I was hoping for.

I show a series of other photos that can be found on the Internet. Any variety will do. Most everything you find in photos will be from 1860 forward, but there are many drawings and artist renditions of slavery prior to 1860. (Simple Google Image search of “slaves”, “slave life”, “slavery” will give you many to choose from.)

I end the photo segment with a photo taken in 1863 (my focus is prior to this time period, but this photo seems to be very effective and the complete opposite of “The Old Plantation”). I place the photo “Peter” on the screen and ask students what they see. Students are usually horrified at the scarring on this man’s back and this prompts an abundance of chatter. Because this is a powerful image, I allow time (5-10 minutes) for personal journaling at this point. (In addition to a lecture notebook, each student brings a composition notebook/journal daily.)

As always, I ask if there are volunteers who want to share their journals.

I place “The Old Plantation” back on the screen and ask them if this is an accurate portrayal of slave life in America? The answer I’m looking for is, that yes, it could be, but overwhelmingly it wasn’t the case and that the life of a slave was extremely difficult.

Lecture

At this point in the unit I have already discussed the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade. Students have learned about the capture and transport of slaves from Africa to the Americas and have also learned about colonial slavery, indentured servitude, colonists’ inability to enslave the American Indians, language barriers, and the cultural differences between individual slaves. We have also looked at various state laws regarding slavery as hereditary and how America sets itself apart from the rest of the world by making slavery a lifelong and hereditary institution.

Prior to student research I do a short lecture on slave families. *see historical background document for that outline.

Research and Diary Writing

Before we begin researching, I ask the students to take 10 minutes and write a diary entry, acting for a moment as a slave. They can write about anything: their daily routine, emotions, family etc... I always ask for volunteer readers at the end of an activity such as this, allowing 4-5 students to share their work.

**Note: The above portion I will be adding to next year’s lesson. I’m curious to see the potential differences between their first diary entries and their post research final diary entries. It could prove to be a valuable tool in assessing the impact of primary source research.

Discuss diary requirements. Because students journal in all of my classes, they have a good understanding of what goes into a diary/journal entry. If you need to remind them: entries can include thoughts, questions, emotional responses, goals,

restatement of a day's events, etc. Students will write five diary entries that are at least a good paragraph size in length. You may want to be more specific than that, but I found that once students start this project, they have no problem filling $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ a page per entry. Diaries must be typed, creative, and demonstrate new knowledge about slave life/culture gained from researching their primary source documents.

I hand out the "scoring rubric" as a guide for students. *Note: I rarely use a rubric to give a "score", but rather to show students what needs to be in their work in order to earn a certain grade on a paper.

Students are given two websites to look at prior to writing their diaries. The first is part of a National Archives online exhibit. Tell students that right now they are only dealing with Section I of the exhibit. The other sections cover the Civil War and beyond. (I allow them to peruse the entire thing if they want, but they can only use Section I to help them with their diary)

The National Archives: Documented Rights. Section I: Let My People Go
<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/documented-rights/exhibit/section1/>

The second website is a collection of former slave diaries located at the Library of Congress. Make sure you learn to navigate this site prior to the students doing their research as it is a little confusing and they will need some assistance. Some of these narratives are multiple pages long and encourage students to read them in their entirety if they so choose but that it isn't necessary. Students should read at least a page from ten different narrators prior to writing their diaries.

Born in Slavery: Slave Narrative from the Federal Writer's Project, 1936-1938
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>

Allow as much time as you have available for research and diary writing. 3-5 hours should be enough if the majority of the assignment is being done in class.

Read Aloud

On the day the assignment is due, I ask students to take a moment and find their favorite diary entry to read aloud to the class. Having students make a circle so that they have each other's full attention works best. Volunteers usually start the process of each student reading their piece in class.

Turn in assignments.

Wrap Up

Post the butcher paper from the first day of the lesson. Pass out Post It notes to students and ask the question: Now what do you know about slave life/culture in the United States? Is it different than what you had imagined or previously learned? Once students have a few thoughts written down have them post their pieces of paper in the third section of the butcher paper. Read some of these aloud to the class.

Class discussion is a large part of my classes and this wrap up activity led into a long discussion of not only slavery and its atrocities, but also accuracy of information, lack of textbook coverage of slavery, slavery as it exists today, the importance of family and/or sources of emotional outlet, etc. If you have time in class I encourage taking as much time as you can to allow students to talk about the issue. You may be surprised at what they have to say.

Extensions

This activity was modified from an existing lesson plan from “Slavery in America”, a very useful Internet site with essays, lesson plans and photos that could be used in any classroom. <http://www.slaveryinamerica.org> ** At the time this lesson was written, access to this site was unavailable.

Depending on the class, culminating activities could include skits, reenactments, speeches, persuasive essays and much more. This could be adapted for use with younger students so long as you carefully select your age appropriate photos and perhaps print out specific diary entries that you have already examined.

Sources:

“Africans in America” PBS Online <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/home.html>

“Born in Slavery” - <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/snhome.html>

Freedom: A Photographic History of African American Struggle. Phaidon Press 2002

History: African American – University of Washington Libraries
<http://guides.lib.washington.edu/content.php?pid=78827&sid=583725>

National Archives Online Exhibits - <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/>

“Slavery and the Making of America” PBS Online <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery>

Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database
<http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces>

History and Background Information

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When I discuss the topic of slavery with my U.S. History classes I always start from the “beginning” so to speak. I try not to intrude on any World History teaching that students may have received from another teacher at another school, nor do I repeat too much of what I teach in my own World History classes. So my review of slavery, both the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade, and colonial/early American slavery is fairly brief. I try and give students an idea of how many Africans were taken and where they were taken to, as well as many of the laws that various states had prior to the Civil War.

Students will have also read from Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States*. By this point in the year they have read Chapter 1 “Columbus, the Indians, and Human Progress”, Chapter 2 “Drawing the Color Line”, and the first third (up to 1850) of Chapter 9 “Slavery Without Submission, Emancipation Without Freedom”. By this point students understand the roots of the slave trade, why colonists and later Americans chose Africans rather than American Indians, and are beginning to have a good grasp of laws and treatment of African slaves in the United States.

Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Africa

- Sub-Saharan Africa lost nearly 12 ½ million people between 1500-1867 to TAST
- Some believe that just as many were carried off east to Indian Ocean area
- One in eight died en route, as many died before they left or after they arrived
- 12 or so ports supplied slaves

Europe

- Major starting point for half of the trans-Atlantic slaving voyages
- European demand for sugar was the driving force behind 350 years of slave trading

Caribbean

- One of two major broad regional markets for slave trade
- Sugar
- Jamaica and Cuba absorbed much of the trade
- Caribbean ports sent out more slaving expeditions than North American ports

Brazil

- Center of Portuguese trade
- Consistently the largest destination for slaves in the Americas

North America

- Relatively minor role in TAST
- Less than 5% of all known slave voyages, less than 4% of slaves carried off from Africa
- Population growth (different than in most areas) meant less dependence on slave immigration

The following numbers are never tested upon. Students take notes to use for future essays or class discussions.

1501-1866 12,521,336 slaves taken from Africa

Spain/Uruguay = 1,061,524

Portugal/Brazil= 5,848,265

GB= 3,259,440

USA=305,326

France= 1,381,404

Embarked and Disembarked per year

1518 1,571 left 1,100 arrived

1597 11,677 left 8,636 arrived

1729 66,484 55,035

1767 89,940 75,878

1837 103,363 85,569

1525 First slave voyage direct from Africa to Americas

1797 US congress passes legislation prohibiting the manufacture, fitting, equipping or loading of any vessel to be employed in the slave trade

1808 Abolition of slave trade in Britain take effect

1839 amistad

1867 Last transatlantic slave voyage arrive in America

1619 First Africans arrive in Virginia

By 1788 most of the north had made slavery illegal

1865 13th amendment abolishes slavery

Slavery in America

Legal Rights and Government:

Early on during settlement times, laws regarding African laborers didn't exist

- Black workers were on equal footing with white indentured servants
- In fact they enjoyed a sort of freedom that enslaved blacks would never know
- Ex:take employers to court

1662 Virginia

- Legally recognizes slavery as hereditary, lifelong condition

1696 South Carolina- "Act for the Better Ordering and Governing of Negroes and Slaves"

- Sever penalties for offenses committed by blacks
- Excused whites who killed slaves while carrying out a punishment

Virginia early 1700's

- First colony to define status of slaves in explicit legal terms
- All blacks and mulattoes were considered slaves
- All slaves "shall be held as real estate"

Slave Codes

- Outline slave rights or non-rights and acceptable treatment and rules regarding slaves
- Varied from state to state but all had common themes
 - Slaves couldn't own guns, were not to be educated, slave marriages not considered legally binding, you could raffle or trade your slaves, slaves were not considered court witnesses, slaves put to death for 'attacking' or 'raping' white women

Lesson Plan Lecture:

Family - (this short lecture is given to students prior to doing their diary research.)

Africa - Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Consequences

- Most were stripped of their relatives, shipped off without them
- Separated from almost all kinship groups

Plantation life

- Very difficult for slaves to form families
- Work was long and exhausting
- Most states had laws forbidding marriage
- Agricultural demands ensured that there were more men than women
- Early 1700's we see a shift
 - Idea of profiting off of slave families comes into existence
 - Marriage would make slaves content and more docile
 - Marriage would lead to children
 - This is increasingly popular after Congress outlaws international slave trade in 1807
- Often times slave families lived on different plantations
- Husbands with permission would visit wives and children once or twice a week
- Men considered replaceable and because of the high premium placed on their labor would be bought and sold often
- Slave women were often assigned a new husband by their master
- Male children often taken from families to be sold to another plantation
- Pretty, light-skinned girls would be sold into prostitution or became a concubine

Notebook
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Listed below are the materials needed for this lesson plan, photos, handouts, rubric and student examples.

Materials Needed:

- Large piece of butcher paper
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- Computers and Internet Access
- Scanned/overhead/computer images of
 - “The Old Plantation” unknown artist
 - “Peter” 1863
- Diary Assignment Instructions Handout
- Scoring Rubric Handout



“The Old Plantation” attributed to John Rose, Beaufort County, South Carolina, probably 1785–1790.



This photo is often referred to as “Peter”, a former slave that escaped to Union lines in 1863.

Diary Entry Assignment

Directions: After thoroughly researching slave documents and slave narratives online, you will create five diary entries that demonstrate your understanding of what it was like to be a slave in the United States prior to emancipation.

Your entries must:

- Be typed
- Demonstrate an understanding of your narrative research
- Be creative
- Include themes as emotion, daily life, music, culture, religion, friendships/family, hardships
- Be ¼ - ½ page in length

Scoring Rubric

Letter Grade	A	B	C	D-F
Creativity	The story contains many creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The author has really used imagination.	The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions that contribute to the reader's enjoyment. The author has used his imagination.	The story contains a few creative details and/or descriptions, but they distract from the story. The author has tried to use his imagination.	There is little evidence of creativity in the story. The author does not seem to have used much imagination.
Focus on Assigned Subject Matter	The entire story is related to the assigned topic and allows the reader to understand much more about the topic.	Most of the story is related to the assigned topic. The story wanders off at one point, but the reader can still learn something about the topic.	Some of the story is related to the assigned topic, but a reader does not learn much about the topic.	No attempt has been made to relate the story to the assigned topic.
Setting	Many vivid, descriptive words are used to tell when and where the story took place.	Some vivid, descriptive words are used to tell the audience when and where the story took place.	The reader can figure out when and where the story took place, but the author didn't supply much detail.	The reader has trouble figuring out when and where the story took place.
Interpretation	Through research, student has accurately demonstrated their knowledge of slave life/culture through the diary entry.	Student demonstrates knowledge of some aspects of slave life/culture through the diary entry.	Student demonstrates some understanding of slave life/culture but gives very few examples in the diary entry.	Student shows little to know researched understanding of slave life/culture in their diary entry.

Student Examples

Student examples have been sent as individual documents for fear that they would not come through digitally in a separate folder. Although the Instructional Plan requirements are to send examples of above average, average and below average work, all of my students received an A on this assignment. Each student went above and beyond, including dialect and creating specific personas, neither of which was a requirement for this project. Attached are examples of above average work. Each attachment is at least one entry from five different students in the class.

Reflection
Sharla Crawford

Fall of 2011 will be the beginning of my third year teaching. As a novice teacher I have worked hard every year to provide my students with as much material as I can in a relevant, interesting and meaningful way. Along the way I have done very well, however sometimes the lessons that I have given have fallen very flat. This is to be expected, as I am fully aware that as soon as I feel like I am an expert at this teaching thing, I should quit. However, I don't deal well with mediocrity and although I am completely aware that I cannot engage every single student during every single lesson, I am constantly trying to find ways to improve my teaching, the lessons that I present and the way in which I present them. This desire to improve contributed largely to applying for the TAH grant program. And so far, it has already paid off.

I am incredibly passionate about teaching the history of the oppressed. You see it in all my lessons and units whether it is World History, U.S. History or American Government. I received my undergraduate and graduate degree from a university that prides itself on social justice teaching and pushes its soon to be teachers to as be socially minded as they are. So imagine my dismay when my students don't get as excited or moved about the information I am giving them as I am about it. It was probably the biggest blow to my ego that I have had. I spend a good portion of my year teaching African American History and find that although students really get into the Civil Rights Movement, they don't connect at all to the slavery portions. This had bummed me out for three semesters...until this spring.

Using biography to teach my students sounded like a great idea as soon as I heard about this TAH program, however I couldn't wrap my brain around the idea of handing out an entire memoir to my students and asking them to read it. Sure I am interested in the life of Benjamin Franklin, but would my students be? Short answer is no. It was during our January colloquium in which we were given the lesson plan where we read short biographies of different American Indians as well as the photo interpretation lesson that it clicked. This entire time I was thinking "books" when it came to biography and January helped me realize that this wasn't the only option.

I have loved slave narrative and song since I was first exposed to it many years ago and hoped that my students would find some interest in it as well. However I had never quite figured how to implement it into a lesson on slavery. I always felt it was too far out there, I would have to slow down and step back from the information giving portion of my classes, but as I read those American Indian pieces in January I realized I WAS learning about that time period as I read their short stories. I literally had an "aha" moment and I can't tell you enough how rewarding it has been.

I didn't set out to have this lesson be the instructional plan that I would turn in for TAH. I knew I needed to change things up to engage my students in the topic of slavery more than I had in the past, but I would have never imagined that the results would have been as great as they were.

My U.S. History class this past semester was a chatty, fairly young group that always asked questions during lecture and I'm quite sure prided themselves on getting me off topic during lectures. I was a bit hesitant to have them do this research and write the diaries because earlier in the semester a short research and presentation project ended up being quite lackluster. However from the moment I began talking about writing from the standpoint of a slave my students were in. They researched thoroughly and with extreme interest. In between the times that you could hear a pin drop because they were so into their reading and research, there were horrified gasps, students encouraging other students to read a certain passage or shouts to me to "come read this, this is insane!"

Initially my students struggled with the dialect of many of the researched narratives but I encouraged them to go slow, read it out loud, or read to another student if it helped. Imagine my surprise when every single assignment handed in had some, if not all written in dialect. When I introduced the assignment and students began reading narratives, I did have a student ask if they had to write in dialect. I immediately informed the entire class that no, it was not a requirement and we had a short discussion on how difficult it is to read, let alone write. I almost cried when I read through their finished work and realized how hard they had worked on this assignment. The finished product far exceeded my expectations. My students absolutely loved this assignment and told me that I should use it more often.

Also not required was forming an actual identity for themselves while writing their entries however all of them at a minimum named themselves, with almost all of them talking about their master, family, their age etc... Following the lesson I felt that maybe this should be one of the requirements but I'm not sure about this. I may try it again without asking for it just to see what they produce.

I have been a bit hesitant to use the butcher paper KWL type chart ever since it was introduced to me in teachers college, but I have to admit, it was a very helpful tool. Not only did it give me feedback on what I teach versus what they want to know, the students felt that they had some ownership in the lesson when asked what they want to learn. My students told me that they have often felt left out of their learning and simply being asked what they want to learn allowed them to have more investment in the lesson.

Noted in the lesson plan for future use is a pre-write of sorts. I would love to see a diary entry written from the slave perspective prior to their research. This could help assess what they learned. I did however feel that the KWL chart was helpful in assessing this as well. At the end, we didn't have a single question that had been left unanswered. Unfortunately, this piece was recycled before a picture was taken of it.

I feel very lucky to have experienced such a positive first instructional plan. This lesson will be used, and I'm sure tweaked here and there, again and again in future classes.

Name- Andrew Pollok

Plantation- cotton plantation

Owner- Bernard Wilkins

My master is a white man, he stands only a mere 5'3 and has a stocky figure, his old wrinkled face scarred with permanent wrinkle simply from frowning so much. His blue eyes and pale skin are images I long to forget. He is a cruel man working me and others all day without any thought of mercy.

My work is picking the cotton from the plants or (the devils horns).

Entry 1. I have been pulled away from my home by a band of white men I have been abducted now for a matter of hours I don't know what's going on, why are they doing this and why is God letting this happen to me? Days, I do not know when I will see my home again, or if I will see it again. These white men have been forcing me to work their fields of cotton all day. My body is sore from the labor of one day, I am afraid that if I could hardly handle one day of work how will I survive the following days to come. Master gave me one brake today from working the fields, only to go to the bathroom, I tried to stay in the bathroom stall as long as possible, I do not know how much more of this I can take. Night has come and I am still picking at these devils horns, all I want right now is to sit and rest just for a bit.

Entry 2. It has been 3 days now and still, no sign of end to this relentless work. Bending over and picking the cotton has made my back very weak and painful, as well as my flesh peeling off from the suns unbearable heat. My hands are bloodied every day from the shredding spines of the cotton plants I am mixed with emotions of anger and sadness; God! Why would you make me suffer like this? I have done good deeds and I pray. Master whipped me for 5 minutes because I was found sitting down while picking the plants, my legs were so tired I couldn't help it I just needed a quick rest. I tried my best to forget about my brother, but his memories still thrive in my mind. How I wish to see him he was taken so suddenly by another band of white men. "Brother, I pray that your time is better than mine" ... in time this will end.

Entry 3. I don't know what day it is; I have come to except the fact that this is my new life. I've been picking at these plants, my hands now resemble a rotted log ^{more} than human hands. My hands are covered in leathery blisters, I can't tell if I have gotten used to the pain or if my hands have lost some of their feeling. This numb, yet painful feeling is not just in my hand, but throughout my body, my back doesn't hurt as bad even though I can feel the out of place joints. My body has become muscular, yet bony like that of a rabid animal. I wonder, "Does master care at all about me"?

Isa bout lunch time, Priscilla com to help me cook fo all the other slaves. Massa sold bout 15 of dem a few days ago, they refuse to work. But I don know what kinda money he plannin on makin cause he whipped them a lot n they were skinnier than a tree branch. Priscilla started cryin today, she said she don't like the way the massa treats us and she wants to run away n steal all us slaves n help us be free. She say she comin up with a plan for us to escape. I am scared but I don wanna be here foreva. Jr is sick today he caught a cold and been very fussy. I put some sage in his bottle to try n help his fevea. Im back workin on the plantation today. It is a bit chilli but is startin to warm up. My hands got blisters from pickin so much crops. Im tryin to make myself som gloves to cover my hands with. I been dreamin a lot, I been dreamin bout havin my own house for me n Jr, and cookin cookies and pies, takinin a nice hot bath and wrapin up with a warm blanket next to a fire wit Jr. The otha week massa put me in shack fo two days because I did not work hard enuf. All dis dreamin got me thinkin of a way I can escape. I been hearin stories about other seen run away slaves on da river but I have yet to see one. All the otha slaves here like to sing durin the day wile we be workin. They be singin stories n secret codes to help othas escape. Its also a way fo us to communicate wit out the massa knowin. This is one of the songs I learned,

*Swing low, sweet chariot,
Comin' for to carry me home!*

I looked ova Jordan n what did I see,
Comin' fo to carry me home!
A band of angels comin' after me,
Comin' fo to carry me home

If you get there befo I do,
Comin' fo to carry me home

Jess tell my friends that I'm
acomin' too,
Comin' fo to carry me home.

I'm sometimes up n
sometimes down,
Comin' fo to carry me home,
But still my soul feels
heavenly bound
Comin' fo to carry me home!

Well massa will be home
soon must start workin.

Aug. 11, 1788

I was sent to work the fields today. I usually never leave the house, but sir says its harvestin time and I better git down to them field over yonder and pick some cotton 'less I wanna get a whippin tonight. I dont complain cus he been real good to me in my life, always give me ever' thing I ever needed. I wus just a little girl when my master bought me up n took me from my mama to work in his kitchen. Hell, his wife done taught me to read an his little girl Clara wus my best frend till she up an got married an left me. That's my name too, Clara Patterson. Us black folks is always bein named after our white masters. You can imagine it bein a bit silly havin the same name as my white best frend, but I reckon its easier on 'em. Not so many names to remember. The Patterson plantation is one of the biggest in the South an he gots over 200 slaves workin in his cotton fields I reckon. I never do see em 'less I'm workin out there wit 'em. I always bin a servant girl in the house, even got my own lil room in the attic an they give me paper to rite my diary tho I hardly get no time to do it. I'm still grateful.

Sept. 4

Been workin them fields for weeks now. My hands are blistered an my back feels right broke. I thank God ever' day for my luck cus I'm jus a house girl an I dont gotta spent all my days out in da sun. The one thing my ma n pa ever did for me was bein a couple a good lookin black folks. All the men stare at me when I join em in da fields durin the harvest. Includin my masters son John he likes ta watch us an make sure we doin our job right. Sometimes I catch him lookin at jus me. Maybe one day he'll ask for my hand. Wouldn't that be somethin? Id like ta see my folks' faces when they hear I done married a white man.

Sept. 22

A couple of the field workers ran off yestaday. Master sent the hounds out an brought 'em all back. All except this boy who kept runnin and done got bit to death. He was even younger

Zach Mittleider

Entry three

I got my first lick from the whip today for not getting my bail of cotton, this is the first time in a year that I have not got my bail. Mr. Watson asked me why I didn't get the bail. I told him it's too hot to be out in the field picking cotton without any water. The next morning he tied me to a tree and whipped me all day taken breaks to either go eat or watch all the other slaves. My back was so torn up I couldn't even lie down. He put salt in my cut which was worse than the licks from the whip. The ladies at the camp had to tear a few pieces of skin off and clean the cuts so they wouldn't get infected. Mr. Watson made me go work in the sun in the middle of the field the next day and I had to pick double or more licks from the whip at night. This sent a message throughout the whole camp from that day on no one complained to Mr. Watson. At the end of the day I had picked more than triple my daily amount and Mr. Watson gave me some extra food and took me aside then said sorry to me. He never talked to me again.

US History

3/15/2011

My Diary

I was sold off the other day, I believe da year is 1810 and im jus' about 17 I spect. I'm havin a real heck of a time getting used to my new name, as it was Benjamin Dawson when I was at my olda plantation back in South Carolina, But now they all done sold me off to a bigga plantation in Virginia and changed my last name to Smith, I believe dat is cause my new owners' last name is Smith, first name James. The first thing I noticed when I's pulled up to Mr. Smiths plantation was all the hound dogs pinned up in a cage in the front yad, and I thought to myself, no 'scapin this plantation, as I have seen many black folk at my previous plantation try gettin 'way only to find themselves hunted down by da dogs and brought back to be givin a good whippin. My new quarters is terrible. All I gots to sleep on is a blanket, below dat is dirt. The quarters is small too and I's got fo otha people livin in the same quarters I do, its very crowded.

Benjamin Smith

I haven't eatin much the last couple days due to bein sad without my little Brother and and my Ma whos I assume be back at da old plantation, I miss dem so much. I don't really like my new plantation too much, my new owna is real mean. He's been havin me do work round da house lately, and everynow and den while im a workin he will come walkin by and give me a hard backhand across da face I spect he just does it to keep me workin hard o to put fear in my head, to make sure I wont be runnin 'way on him, im not quite sure. I's finally met all the white folk of the house, there be Mr. Smiths two Daughtas, Mary Smith who is nine years old and Emily Smith who is 'bout 11 years old, and Mr. Smiths son James Jr. Smith who is 16 so me and him are close in age. There is also Mr. Smiths wife Sharron Smith, im not quite sure how ol' she is. I like da Smith kids, dey don't seem to judge me as bad as da olda white folk does and theys' much nica. Well goodbye fo now.

Benjamin Smith